



# News Release

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CONTACT:  
David Blanchette  
(217) 558-8970

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **Freedom in the nation's capital**

### ***Struggle for equality in Washington, D.C., is topic of March 22 book discussion and signing at Presidential Museum***

*SPRINGFIELD* – All men are created equal – except, it seemed, in the old southern city of Washington, D.C. The fight in the nation's capital to claim and enforce the rights won during the Civil War will be the topic of a book discussion and signing on Tuesday, March 22 at 7 p.m. at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.

Kate Masur, author of the new book *An Example for All the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle over Equality in Washington, D.C.*, will discuss the grassroots struggles, the city politics, Congress, and the presidency, to reveal how the District of Columbia was unique as a battleground in the American struggle over equality.

The March 22 event in the Museum's Union Theater is free, but reservations must be made by calling (217) 558-8934.

In *An Example for All the Land*, Masur offers the first major study in more than 50 years of Washington during Reconstruction. After slavery's demise, the question of racial equality produced a multifaceted debate about who should have which rights and privileges, and in which places. Masur shows that black Washingtonians demanded public respect for their organizations and equal access to streetcars, public schools, the vote, and municipal employment. Congressional Republicans, in turn, passed local legislation that made the capital the nation's vanguard of racial equality, drawing the attention of woman suffragists who hoped for similar experiments in women's rights. But a conservative coalition soon mobilized and, in the name of reform and modernization, sought to undermine African Americans' newfound influence in local affairs. In a stunning reversal, Congress then abolished local self-government, making the capital an exemplar of disfranchisement amid a national debate about the dangers of democracy.

Kate Masur is an assistant professor of history at Northwestern University. She has published several articles on the Civil War era, including one on Abraham Lincoln and the African American delegation of 1862, and another on the wartime use of the term "contraband" to refer to fugitives from slavery. A native Illinoisan, she teaches classes on the Civil War and Reconstruction, Abraham Lincoln in History and Memory, and other topics in United States history.

Visit [www.presidentlincoln.org](http://www.presidentlincoln.org) for more information about programs and exhibits at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

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